

Montgomery, Elsner & Pardieck, Attorneys at Law

Founded: 1885

Location:

Montgomery Law Firm: 102 First National Bank Building, Seymour (1924); 209 West Second Street (1940, 1972); 308 West Second Street (1972– )

Elsner Law Firm: 116½ North Chestnut Street, Seymour (1904, 1940–mid-1960s); 316 West Tipton Street (mid-1960s–1972); 308 West Second Street (1972– )

Two of the oldest law firms in Jackson County merged in 1971. Together they claim a history that includes a state supreme court justice, state representatives, a state deputy attorney general, and county and city attorneys. In 1998 the firm of Montgomery, Elsner & Pardieck continued to offer counsel in general, civil, trial, banking, corporation, taxation, real estate, and probate law.

Oscar H. Montgomery set up a law office in Seymour in the 1880s. After completing an undergraduate education at Hanover College in 1881 he studied law under A. P. Charles in Seymour. For a time after his apprenticeship ended he practiced his profession in Greenfield, but he soon moved back to Seymour. He became well known throughout southern Indiana for his “unusual number” of successful appeals to the state supreme court. In 1905 he ran for a seat on the state’s highest court and, along with several fellow Republicans, won. While on the court he delivered 240 opinions; 70 of them were reprinted in a prestigious legal journal of the time. The 1910 election sent Montgomery back to Seymour to reclaim his practice.

After returning to his hometown Montgomery pursued an active legal and social life until his death in 1936. He acted as the city attorney for a decade and was elected president of the Indiana Bar Association. Outside the courtroom he served on both the county and state Republican committees and was a director of the First National Bank. In 1933 he attended the

Indiana Constitutional Convention to ratify the Twenty-first Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Shortly after the turn of the century T. Harlan Montgomery joined his father in the practice. Like his father he began his undergraduate education at Hanover College, but he later changed colleges, graduating from Princeton University in 1910. He moved back to Indiana to study law and received his LL.B. in 1912 from Indiana University. He continued a family tradition by serving as city attorney for several years. Two of T. Harlan's sons joined their father in 1950. Henry H. was the firm's first graduate of an out-of-state law school. He took both his law classes and his prelaw courses at the University of Arizona. Richard H. attended Princeton for his first degree before taking his graduate coursework at the Harvard Law School.

Neither of the brothers entered politics, but Richard served on several state boards, including the Indiana Disciplinary Commission in the mid-1950s and the State Board of Law Examiners from 1958 until 1963. During the mid-1950s he was also elected to the Indiana State Bar Association's board of managers. The firm prospered under the father-sons team. The Montgomerys continued to represent the First National Bank of Seymour, as in the past, but they added several clients, including the Seymour Woolen Mills, and they also acted as the local representative for several large companies, including the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad.

Edward Peter Elsner founded the younger of the two law firms in Seymour in 1904. He chose to remain at Indiana University for his law degree after a two-year stint in Bloomington for preparatory course work. He supported the Democratic party and served as the region's state senator from 1914 until 1921. Like Montgomery, he was a trusted counselor, serving as Seymour's city attorney for twenty years and as the representative for several companies

including the Jackson County Loan & Trust Company and the Pennsylvania and Baltimore & Ohio Railroads.

Edward P. Elsner, Jr., was born in Seymour in 1924. He graduated from Indiana University with both a bachelor's degree and a law degree in the late 1940s. Like several predecessors in the firm, including his father, he sought public office, winning a place in the Indiana General Assembly in 1957 on the Democratic party slate. He had been the Jackson County attorney for two years before he won the state office. Edward Jr. earned the respect of his peers and was selected to serve on the State Board of Law Examiners in the late 1960s. In 1998 he remained the firm's senior attorney.

Margarett S. Pardieck hails from Sheridan. She too received both her law degree and her undergraduate education at Indiana University, graduating in the early 1960s. She served as the deputy attorney general for Indiana shortly after graduating from law school. In 1969 she accepted the post of Jackson County attorney, a position she held for two years. Before the merger she was affiliated with the Montgomery & Montgomery law firm, where she had been an associate since graduation and was later named a partner.

At the same time Pardieck was working as the county's attorney, the firm added Kenneth A. Layton, not surprisingly a graduate of the Indiana University School of Law. Unlike the senior partners, however, he had attended Purdue University as an undergraduate. A few years after Layton joined the firm, Thomas Lantz became an associate. He had attended Indiana University as both a law student and an undergraduate.

In the early 1980s the firm hired an author and its first Indiana University–Indianapolis law school graduate. Steven K. Robison has had several articles appear in *Res Gestae* and the conference manuals of the National Organization of Social Security Claimants. After he received

his undergraduate education at DePauw University, he took his law coursework at Duke University. Instead of pursuing political posts outside law circles, Robison chose to campaign for a place within the law community. He was elected vice president and president of the Jackson County Bar Association in 1988 and 1989, respectively, and the parliamentarian for the Indiana State Bar Association's House of Delegates.

More attorneys followed, including David W. Paugh, who joined the firm after graduating summa cum laude in 1979 from Indiana University–Indianapolis. The firm's second author and politician came onboard after an extensive formal education. Jeffrey J. Lorenzo, a native of Gary, graduated from Creighton University, went on to earn a master's degree from Purdue University, and then proceeded to law school in Bloomington. He was the chief deputy prosecuting attorney for Seymour for most of the 1980s and the city's attorney from 1985 until 1994. Adding to his duties was his election to the board of managers of the Jackson County Bar Association in 1992 and an elevation to the association's presidency in 1986.

The firm continued to monopolize the city's attorney post in 1994 with the addition of Jeffrey A. Lewellyn, a native of Indianapolis and a graduate of both Murray State University and the Indiana University–Indianapolis law school. He quickly found a place in Jackson County's legal society by the early 1990s. He was elected secretary-treasurer of the Jackson County Bar Association in 1991, its vice president in 1992, and its president in 1993.